

Blind teacher scoops prestigious scholarship

By Godfrey Ojore

Born blind, Simon Peter Olaki has had to leap over several hurdles right from his childhood. Today, four decades on, his steely resilience and positive approach to life is paying off in many ways.

The 43-year-old deputy headteacher of Soroti Senior Secondary School has shown that he has a clear vision after securing a Commonwealth scholarship to study in the UK.

"It is not a simple matter to emerge victorious out of the possibly thousands of applicants. It is by God's grace that I was awarded the grant. I am absolutely excited," he said before departing. He flew out of the country looking sharp in a dark suit yesterday.

He is to pursue a master's in educational leadership at Manchester University in the UK.

He first attained his bachelor's degree in education on government sponsorship from Makerere University and got employment as a teacher at St Francis School of the Blind, Madera in Soroti district.

He taught at St Francis Madera for eight years before he opted for a transfer to Soroti Senior Secondary School, where he taught literature and English at A'level.

When the school advertised a vacancy for the post of deputy headteacher in 2016, Olaki applied and emerged successful.



Olaki in class at Soroti Senior Secondary School recently. Photo by Godfrey Ojore

The school administration received the news of him winning scholarship as a great milestone in his career.

"It is an achievement worth celebrating because he is going to return a better person and the skills he will acquire will be imparted to our students. Olaki being a co-operative teacher, I am sure he will share with us as well," Charles Peter Opolot, also a deputy headteacher, said.

He described Olaki as a hardworking and intelligent person.

At his former school (St Francis), his former boss Sr. Winfred Agwang, described him as a blessing and a friend to everybody.

"Olaki is a self-motivated teacher who taught both O and A'level English and literature respectively. I



Olaki at his home in Soroti district recently

am proud of him and I am sure he will return a more empowered teacher," Sr. Agwang said.

Olaki, a Manchester United soccer club fan, hopes that sometime during his one-year study at Manchester University, he will get a chance to visit Old Trafford and 'watch' his favourite

football team play.

NRM boss hails him

"He was one person who did not want sympathy from people because he is a blind man. He is a great storyteller and we used to move together to fetch water from the well," Dr. Kenneth Omona, the deputy treasurer of the National Resistance Movement, said.

They were together at Teso College Aloet where Omona was their head prefect in 1997. "I am very happy to hear that he is in the UK to further his education, he is the pride of Teso," Dr. Omona said.

Elizabeth Akinor, the programmes controller at Enop radio in Soroti, who went through the hands of Olaki at St Mary's Girls Secondary School described

him as a special teacher who knew all students in the class by name.

"Even if you changed your sitting position Olaki would know and would call you back. He is a king of literature," Akinor said.

To Esther Amuge who sat for her A'level last year, Olaki was more of a parent who would make time with girls and discuss things that hinder girls from concentrating at school.

"He engages all students at class because he is a very humorous teacher that students do not want to leave the class even after his lesson has ended," Amuge noted.

Born to Tom Olliot (RIP) and Agnes Anemoir of Guyaguya sub-county in Kanakawi district, Olaki is the only of six children in his family to have gone through school and get employed.

For him, growing up visually impaired meant many obstacles. But what he lacked in visual ability, he made up for in a determined character. Having been in the teaching profession for 18 years, Olaki wanted to further his education, but the availability of special equipment to facilitate his learning was a challenge.

"My education has been full of challenges because most materials are lacking. Most textbooks are not in Braille format," he said. Despite these setbacks, he did not give up.

Though he was not free to share about his love life, Olaki told New Vision that he is a proud father of four and husband to one wife.